

3.1.1 Effects on Transportation System

This report describes the effects of the proposed project work on the Forest transportation system. No decommissioning of National Forest System (NFS) roads or construction of new NFS roads is being proposed.

Existing Condition of Transportation System

The Chetco Bar Project area is accessed by county road, North Bank Chetco River Road, east of Brookings Oregon. The planning area encompasses land along Forest Service collector road 1107, 1407, 1376, 1909, 1917 and associated spur road. FS Roads 1376 would be the primary route of commercial access to the project area, all of the individual collector roads that provide access into the burned areas connect to North Bank Chetco River Road.

The majority of roads within the project area have been in existence for more than 40 years, with some additions having been constructed in the recent past. With few exceptions, the roads in this project area have been constructed for access to timber harvest areas. Forest Service Road 1376 provides access to the community of Wilderness Retreat, private land inholdings, the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, and recreation opportunities on the wild and scenic Chetco River, as well as resource extraction.

The roads within the project area generally have a pattern of use common to roads in the Rogue River - Siskiyou National Forest. Most roads see moderate public use and administrative traffic through the course of the spring with recreational traffic increasing through the summer. Peak use occurs in the summer with increased recreational uses. Timber sale activity can contribute substantially to daily traffic values, but the pattern of such activity is usually isolated to one particular area at any given time.

The bulk of the roads within the project area do not generally serve any particular destinations. Rather, they provide access to areas of interest for various users. For land managers, these roads serve as access to areas where vegetative management activities are ongoing or planned.

Recent Road Restoration - road work has recently been completed or is scheduled for completion as part of the Chetco Bar Fire Burned Area Emergency Response and Danger Tree removal projects.

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

Alternatives 1

Under Alternative 1, the existing road system would experience no changes in its current status and condition. Roads that are currently in custodial status (Maintenance Level 1) would remain closed and open roads would continue to provide access for recreational, commercial, and administrative functions in the same manner that they currently do. Open roads would receive no maintenance beyond that which is normally scheduled, which is generally devoted to the higher standard roads within the project area.

Alt. 1 would not construct or decommission National Forest system roads, so there would be no effects to the Forest transportation system.

Alternative 2 and 3 - Effects on Transportation System

Effects Common to Action Alternatives

As a function of use during harvest activities, road maintenance activities would be conducted on roads designated for use. As a direct effect, some roads that do not receive recurring maintenance, primarily low standard roads in the Maintenance Level (M/L) 2 category, would see some improvements in both safe drivability and in their ability to handle surface runoff and the resultant sediment. Maintenance Level 2 roads, as a result of use and infrequent blade maintenance, tend to develop shallow ruts in their wheel tracks, which can concentrate shallow flow and lead to increased sediment rates. Post-haul maintenance that would occur on these roads would restore the road surface (without ruts) that would be capable of producing less sediment than their rutted counterparts; post-haul water-barring would also correct roadway drainage issues and minimize sedimentation.

Implementation of the proposed action would result in a temporary increase in open road densities in and adjacent to the project planning area, during the periods when roads are being used for timber haul and post-harvest/project activities (e.g., silvicultural treatments). Under Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 approximately 6 miles of closed roads would be re-opened. Closed roads that are opened for project activities would be re-closed long-term with the same type of closure devices that were present before, using earthen berms or gates and roadway slash.

Alt. 2 and Alt 3 would not construct or decommission National Forest system roads, so there would be no change to the overall miles of open National Forest System Roads. The proposed action would not change road densities or miles.

New road construction

No new road construction is proposed as part of this project.

Reconstruction

No road reconstruction is planned for this project

Cumulative Effects

Within the planning area, many of the roads on private lands are gated and not open to the general public. As a result, their contribution to the transportation system is limited to emergencies and by permission.

The Forest Service has no current or planned permanent system road construction or decommissioning projects within the planning area. As a result, there would be no cumulative effects to the transportation system within the planning area.